

I am writing in support of HB 583, HB 646, and HB 703.

Children in New Hampshire deserve to attend schools that give them an excellent learning experience, the opportunity to socialize with peers, provide access to healthy food, and set them up for future success in life. Those benefits are not available for students who cannot receive free or reduced price lunches if they qualify. These bills would help improve nutrition, reduce food insecurity, enhance academic performance, and remove social stigma around students who need to use this option. Families that are able to take advantage of these programs have incredible benefits.

HB 583 would expedite the process of certifying children on Medicaid for free or reduced price meals, removing the administrative burden of completing multiple forms. This will not only help students receive their meals more quickly, it provides for an easier experience for parents/guardians, meaning they spend less time processing forms and more time playing with and caring for their children.

HB 646 would provide for a similar benefit, but this time allowing parents/guardians with an internet connection to apply online. Being able to complete necessary forms online is a huge benefit that many Granite State residents are able to enjoy, and it should be the same for those needing free or reduced price lunches. Saving time saves money and energy that can be used elsewhere, whether it be with their dependents or local businesses in their community.

HB 703 is a critical component of removing social stigma from those in need of these programs while providing public schools the funds they need to give these students what they need. It's been shown that students who are consistently made fun of or bullied are at increased risk for poor academic achievement, according to current research. With this bill, those students taking advantage of this program will not experience those issues.

Like other New Hampshire residents, I want our students to find success in school, go to college or a trade school, and get good jobs so they may provide for themselves and their families in the future. Without providing free or reduced price lunches to students who need them will ensure they have a bright future. I urge you to pass these bills and give the next generation the opportunity to realize their potential.